

2019 Flag Football Rules

- Game

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams will meet with the officials for a coin toss. The winner of the toss chooses whether to play offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss chooses direction. Whoever started the game on offense will start the second half on defense.
2. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three plays to score a touchdown.
3. If the offense fails to cross midfield or crosses midfield and then fails to score within the allotted downs, the ball changes possession and the opposing team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
4. All possession changes, EXCEPT INTERCEPTIONS, start on the offense's own 5-yard line.
5. Teams will change ends after the first half.

- Equipment

1. The park district will provide each player with an official flag belt and jersey representing their team sponsor.
2. Each team will be provided mouth guards and footballs.
3. No pads are allowed. Braces with any exposed metal will not be allowed. Players may tape hands, fingers, etc. if necessary due to injury.
4. No jewelry is allowed (this includes non-prescription glasses).
5. Jerseys must be tucked in at all times.
6. Shorts or pants worn cannot be the same color as the flags.
7. All cleats must be plastic or molded. No metal cleats are allowed.

- **Field of Play**

1. The field dimensions are 25 yards by 70 yards. The field is divided into two 25-yard halves and a 10-yard end zone on each end. (The dimensions could be altered some depending on space available).
2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone on either side of midfield and before each end zone) teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays (Half back options are legal, however the ball must be thrown to avoid penalty).
3. Each offensive team will face a maximum of TWO no-run zones during a possession; one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain a first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a touchdown.

- **Rosters and Eligibility**

1. Games will be played 7 on 7. Teams must have a minimum of 5 players to play a game. Rosters will be limited to 10 players.
2. If a team only has 6 players, the other team will play with 6 and the rest of the players will be subbed in so that all players play an equal amount of time.
3. **SECOND AND THIRD GRADERS WILL MAKE UP THE 'B' LEAGUE. FIFTH, AND SIXTH GRADERS WILL MAKE UP THE 'A' LEAGUE. FOURTH GRADERS CAN PLAY EITHER B OR A LEAGUE. THE PLAYER MUST DECLARE PRIOR TO SEASON BEGINNING AND WILL REMAIN IN THAT LEAGUE FOR THE SEASON.**

- **Timing and Overtime**

1. Game lengths will be two 25-minute halves with a continuous clock. The clock will only stop for injuries and timeouts.
2. Halftime will be 3 minutes.
3. Once the ball is spotted, a team will have 30 seconds to snap the ball. Officials will be lenient the first couple weeks, but after that, a penalty will be incurred for delay of game.
4. Each team has two 30 second timeouts per half.

5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. If the score is tied at the end of regulation, the following format will be used.

Each team will get one play to score from either the one-point line or the two-point line. If the team possessing the ball first goes for one and scores, the team going second can either go for one to tie and force a second OT, or go for two and the win. If the score is still tied after one overtime, a second overtime will be played. During the regular season, a maximum of four overtimes will be played. If the score is still tied after four overtimes, the game will end in a tie. During the post-season tournament, the game will continue until a winner is determined.

A coin flip will determine who possesses the ball first in the overtime. If a second overtime is needed, the team the possessed the ball last in the first overtime will possess the ball first in the second overtime, and the same procedure will be followed for the duration of the game.

Starting with the third overtime, each team must go for two points.

There are no timeouts during the overtime. All other regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.

- **Scoring**

1. Touchdowns are worth 6 points.
2. After a touchdown is scored, a team can either go for one point or two. The one-point conversion line is from five yards out. The two-point line is ten yards out. 1-point conversions are PASS ONLY. 2-point conversions can be pass or run.
3. After a touchdown is scored, a team must declare whether they are going for one or two. Once the ball is spotted, a team cannot change its mind unless a timeout is taken. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned for points.

4. Safeties are worth 2 points. Safeties occur when a ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. The quarterback or runner can be called down when their flag is pulled, a flag falls out, their knee or elbow touches the ground, they step out of bounds, a fumble occurs, or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.

- **Live Ball/Dead Ball**

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until an official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and the line of scrimmage. All offsides and false starts will be whistled dead and the penalty will be enforced.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. Substitutions may be made at any dead ball.
5. Any official can whistle the play dead.
6. Played is ruled dead when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground (this includes bad snaps, ball will be placed where the ball hit the ground).
 - b. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier's knee or arm hit the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier's flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flags.
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.
7. Fumbles are automatic dead balls. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble. If a fumble occurs inside the 5-yard no rush zone, the ball will automatically be spotted back on the five-yard line.
8. In case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has the option of either taking the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed, or replay the down at the original line of scrimmage.

- **Running**

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, NOT WHERE THE BALL IS. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run the ball. However, once a rusher crosses the line of scrimmage, the quarterback may run the ball.
3. Handoffs must happen behind the line of scrimmage. Multiple handoffs (reverses, end arounds, etc.) are allowed provided they are behind the line of scrimmage.
4. No laterals of any kind are allowed.
5. Center sneaks are not allowed.
6. No-run zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield and are designed to avoid short-yardage power running situations. Each offensive team approaches a maximum of TWO no-run zones per drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a touchdown.
7. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
8. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind, or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
9. Runners may jump to avoid players on the ground or to "juke" or "sidestep" a defender or to avoid a collision with another player. Diving, hurdling between two defenders, or leaping to avoid a defender will be considered flag guarding and a penalty will be enforced.
10. Spinning is allowed so long as it is done in a controlled manner.
11. No blocking allowed at any time.
12. Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in at all times. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
13. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.

- **Passing**

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
2. All players must be present in the huddle. No sideline tricks.
3. The quarterback can throw the ball away to avoid a sack. However, the ball must go past the line of scrimmage or a penalty will be incurred.
4. Shovel passes are allowed.
5. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, and the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the original line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
6. If the quarterback is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the original line of scrimmage. A safety WILL NOT be incurred.

- **Receiving**

1. All players are eligible receivers including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage.
2. Having players go in motion is legal. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage. Players moving forward at the snap will result in a penalty and automatic loss of down.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions can be returned for a score (with the exception of an interception during a PAT attempt). Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line. The ball will be spotted where the interceptors flags are pulled unless a touchdown is scored.

- **Rushing the Passer**

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. An official will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
4. A legal rush is:
 - a. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - b. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - c. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area) they may return to the rush line, reset, and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - d. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the ball carrier.
5. A penalty may be called if:
 - a. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yard penalty and automatic first down).
 - b. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5 yard penalty and automatic first down).
 - c. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yard penalty and automatic first down).
6. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
7. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.

8. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in roughing the passer and a penalty will be incurred (This includes ALL pass attempts from behind the line of scrimmage).
9. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If an offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact. Any blatant contact initiated by the rusher will result in an unnecessary roughness penalty.
10. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when the flag is pulled.
11. If a sack occurs in the end zone, the defensive team is awarded a safety.

- **Flag Pulling**

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the hands or arms, throwing shoulders and/or elbows, or intentionally covering the flags with hands, arms, or jersey and will result in a penalty.

- **Formations**

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line. The quarterback can be under center or in shotgun formation.
2. Players in motion must be at least one yard behind the line of scrimmage
3. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
4. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
5. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.
6. Direct snaps to running backs are allowed.

- **Unsportsmanlike and Coach's Conduct**

1. If the commissioner or any official witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.
2. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed from coaches, players, or fans. Officials and park district staff reserve the right to remove anyone from park district grounds if they are abusive towards officials or other coaches or players.
3. Foul language from a coach will result in an automatic penalty. A second foul language penalty will result in the coach being ejected for the remainder of the game.
4. Encourage your players. Maintain a positive attitude.
5. Equal playing time is mandatory. Coaches must sub in the players on the bench on every change of possession.

6. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are 10-yard penalties and will result in a loss of down if committed by the offense or an automatic first down if committed by the defense.
7. When making a tackle near the sidelines, the defender must attempt to pull flags at all times. Pushing a runner out of bounds intentionally rather than going for the flag will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
8. Only coaches are allowed in the coach's box. Please keep all other personnel out of the box.
9. Offensive coaches are allowed on the field. Defensive coaches may come onto the field to set up a play while the offense huddles, however the defensive coach must clear the field of play before the snap occurs. Any coaches who interfere with a play whether inadvertently or not, will be penalized.

- **Penalties**

1. The following penalties are five yards
 - a. Offsides
 - b. Illegal rush
 - c. Illegal flag pull
 - d. Roughing the passer
 - e. Holding the ball carrier's clothing when attempting to pull a flag without letting go immediately
 - f. False starts
 - g. Flag guarding
 - h. Illegal forward pass
 - i. Pass interference (Offensive and Defensive).
 - j. Illegal motion
 - k. Delay of game
 - l. Impeding the rusher
 - m. Failure to wear a mouth guard
2. The following penalties are ten yards
 - a. Unnecessary roughness
 - b. Stripping the ball

- c. Screening/Blocking
 - d. Charging
 - e. Tripping
 - f. Any other unsportsmanlike penalties mentioned in the previous section.
3. Defensive penalties will be assessed from the point of infraction if beyond the line of scrimmage and will result in an automatic first down.
 4. Defensive penalties that are dead ball infractions or occur at the line of scrimmage or in the backfield will be enforced from the original line of scrimmage and will result in an automatic first down.
 5. Offensive penalties will be assessed from the original line of scrimmage with the exception of downfield penalties (flag guarding, screening, etc.) and will be automatic loss of down.
 6. No tackling is allowed. However, contact will occur at times when a defender is trying pull the ball-carrier's flags. This is not an automatic penalty. It is a judgement call by the officials and could go either way.

- **Postseason Tournament**

1. At the end of the regular season, a single elimination tournament will be played.
2. Seeding will be determined by teams' records. In the event of a tie, head to head record will be the tie-breaker. In the event of a three-way or more tie or where head to head record may not be applicable, points allowed will be the tie-breaker. If that is a tie as well, a coin-flip will determine the seeding.
3. Awards will also be handed out at the conclusion of the tournament. Each grade level will have an MVP and each team will have one player win a sportsmanship award.